

1 SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 18

2 **49TH LEGISLATURE - STATE OF NEW MEXICO - FIRST SESSION, 2009**

3 INTRODUCED BY

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10 A JOINT MEMORIAL

11 REQUESTING THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION IN COOPERATION WITH
12 THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY TO CONDUCT A FEASIBILITY STUDY
13 TO INSTALL A BRIDGE BARRIER ON THE RIO GRANDE GORGE BRIDGE.

14
15 WHEREAS, deaths resulting from suicide attempts or
16 accidental falls from the Rio Grande gorge bridge in Taos
17 county have increased in recent years; and

18 WHEREAS, the cost of rescue efforts and the danger to
19 emergency responders has increased commensurately with such
20 incidents; and

21 WHEREAS, the Rio Grande gorge bridge has become a
22 significant tourist attraction, and the increasing traffic on
23 the bridge also contributes to higher risks for visitors and
24 public safety personnel; and

25 WHEREAS, New Mexico currently ranks fourth in the United

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1 States for its suicide rate, which is one and one-half to two
2 times the national average; and

3 WHEREAS, the suicide rates among all ethnicities and age
4 groups are four times higher among males (thirty-one and six-
5 tenths per one hundred thousand) than females (six and nine-
6 tenths per one hundred thousand); and

7 WHEREAS, suicide is the ninth-leading cause of death for
8 New Mexicans, and suicide is the second-leading cause of death
9 among persons fifteen to twenty-four years of age and the
10 fourth-leading cause of death among persons thirty-five to
11 fifty-four years of age; and

12 WHEREAS, suicide at the Rio Grande gorge bridge accounts
13 for over fifty percent of all suicides in the Taos county area;
14 and

15 WHEREAS, the national suicide prevention lifeline steering
16 committee has stated its position that the use of bridge
17 barriers is the most effective means of bridge suicide
18 prevention;

19 NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE
20 STATE OF NEW MEXICO that the department of transportation be
21 requested to conduct a feasibility study in cooperation with
22 the department of public safety for the construction or
23 installation of bridge barriers and safety enhancing
24 improvements to the Rio Grande gorge bridge on United States
25 highway 64 in Taos county; and

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the department of transportation report its findings to the appropriate committee of the legislature by December 1, 2009; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that copies of this memorial be transmitted to the secretary of transportation and the secretary of public safety.